Table of Contents

1. Chapter 1
2. Chapter 2
3. Chapter 3
4. Chapter 4

Chapter 1

"You must look out for kittypets" Graypaw remembers his mentors voice in his head as he walked towards twolegplace, as he look through the bushes he saw something sitting on the fence. "a kittypet?" He thought. "He seems smaller than me" Graypaw thought. "I'll watch what he does" Graypaw watched as the kittypet jumped down from the fence into the forest. "He's on thunderclan territory" Lionhearts voice hissed in Graypaw's head. "Yeah i know" Graypaw muttered. "I better stop that kittypet" He thought.

Rusty sat down in the coarse grass beyond the garden fence. He gave his shoulder a nervous lick andwondered how much of Smudge's gossip was true.Suddenly the movement of a tiny creature caught his eye. He watched it scuttle under some brambles.Instinct made him drop into a low crouch. With one slow paw after another he drew his body forwardthrough the undergrowth. Ears pricked, nostrils flared, eyes unblinking, he moved toward the animal.

Hecould see it clearly now, sitting up among the barbed branches, nibbling on a large seed held between itspaws. It was a mouse.Rusty rocked his haunches from side to side, preparing to leap. He held his breath in case his bell rangagain. Excitement coursed through him, making his heart pound. This was even better than his dreams! Thena sudden noise of cracking twigs and crunching leaves made him jump. His bell jangled treacherously, and themouse darted away into the thickest tangle of the bramble bush.Rusty stood very still and looked around.

He could see the white tip of a red bushy tail trailing through aclump of tall ferns up ahead. He smelled a strong, strange scent, definitely a meat-eater, but neither cat nordog. Distracted, Rusty forgot about the mouse and watched the red tail curiously. He wanted a better look.All of Rusty's senses strained ahead as he prowled forward. Then he detected another noise. It camefrom behind, but sounded muted and distant. He swiveled his ears backward to hear it better. Pawsteps? hewondered, but he kept his

eyes fixed on the strange red fur up ahead, and continued to creep onward.

It wasonly when the faint rustling behind him became a loud and fast-approaching leaf-crackle that Rusty realizedhe was in danger.The creature hit him like an explosion and Rusty was thrown sideways into a clump of nettles. Twistingand yowling, he tried to throw off the attacker that had fastened itself to his back. It was gripping him withincredibly sharp claws. Rusty could feel spiked teeth pricking at his neck. He writhed and squirmed fromwhisker to tail, but he couldn't free himself. For a second he felt helpless; then he froze. Thinking fast, heflipped over onto his back. He knew instinctively how dangerous it was to expose his soft belly, but it was hisonly chance.He was lucky—the ploy seemed to work.

He heard a "hhuuffff" beneath him as the breath was knockedout of his attacker. Thrashing fiercely, Rusty managed to wriggle free. Without looking back he sprintedtoward his home.Behind him, a rush of pawsteps told Rusty his attacker was giving chase. Even though the pain from hisscratches stung beneath his fur, Rusty decided he would rather turn and fight than let himself be jumped onagain.He skidded to a stop, spun around, and faced his pursuer.It was another kitten, with a thick coat of shaggy gray fur, strong legs, and a broad face. In a heartbeat,Rusty smelled that it was a tom, and sensed the power in the sturdy shoulders underneath the soft coat.

Thenthe kitten crashed into Rusty at full pelt. Taken by surprise by Rusty's turnabout, it fell back into a dazedheap.The impact knocked the breath out of Rusty, and he staggered. He quickly found his footing and archedhis back, puffing out his orange fur, ready to spring onto the other kitten. But his attacker simply sat up andbegan to lick a forepaw, all signs of aggression gone. Rusty felt strangely disappointed. Every part of him was tense, ready for battle.

"Hi there, kittypet!" meowed the gray tom cheerily. "You put up quite a fight for a tame kitty!"Rusty remained on tiptoe for a second, wondering whether to attack anyway. Then he remembered thestrength he had felt in this kitten's paws when he had pinned

him to the ground. He dropped onto his pads,loosened his muscles, and let his spine unbend. "And I'll fight you again if I have to," he growled."I'm Graypaw, by the way," the gray kitten went on, ignoring Rusty's threat. "I'm training to be aThunderClan warrior."

Rusty remained silent. He didn't understand what this Graywhatsit was meowing about, but he sensedthe threat had passed. He hid his confusion by leaning down to lick his ruffled chest."What's a kittypet like you doing out in the woods? Don't you know it's dangerous?" asked Graypaw."If you're the most dangerous thing the woods has to offer, then I think I can handle it," Rusty bluffed.Graypaw looked up at him for a moment, narrowing his big yellow eyes. "Oh, I'm far from the mostdangerous. If I were even half a warrior, I'd have given an intruder like you some real wounds to thinkabout."

Rusty felt a thrill of fear at these ominous words. What did this cat mean by "intruder"?"Anyway," meowed Graypaw, using his sharp teeth to tug a clump of grass from between his claws, "Ididn't think it was worth hurting you. You're obviously not from one of the other Clans.""Other Clans?" Rusty echoed, confused.Graypaw let out an impatient hiss. "You must have heard of the four warrior Clans that hunt aroundhere! I belong to ThunderClan. The other Clans are always trying to steal prey from our territory, especiallyShadowClan. They're so fierce they would have ripped you to shreds, no questions asked."

Graypaw paused to spit angrily and continued: "They come to take prey that is rightfully ours. It's thejob of the ThunderClan warriors to keep them out of our territory. When I've finished my training, I'll be sodangerous, I'll have the other Clans shaking in their flea-bitten skins. They won't dare come near us then!"Rusty narrowed his eyes. This must be one of the wildcats Smudge had warned him about! Living roughin the woods, hunting and fighting each other for every last scrap of food. Yet Rusty didn't feel scared. Infact, it was hard not to admire this confident kitten. "So you're not a warrior yet?" he asked.

"Why? Did you think I was?" Graypaw purred proudly; then he shook his wide, furry head. "I won't bea real warrior for ages. I have to go through the training first. Kits have to be six moons old before

they evenbegin training. Tonight is my first night out as an apprentice.""Why don't you find yourself an owner with a nice cozy house instead? Your life would be mucheasier," Rusty meowed. "There are plenty of housefolk who'd take in a kitten like you. All you have to do issit where they can see you and look hungry for a couple of days—""And they'd feed me pellets that look like rabbit droppings and soft slop!" Graypaw interrupted. "Noway! I can't think of anything worse than being a kittypet!

They're nothing but Twoleg toys! Eating stuff thatdoesn't look like food, making dirt in a box of gravel, sticking their noses outside only when the Twolegsallow them? That's no life! Out here it's wild, and it's free. We come and go as we please." He finished his speech with a proud spit, then meowed mischievously, "Until you've tasted a fresh-killed mouse, you haven'tlived. Have you ever tasted mouse?" "No," Rusty admitted, a little defensively. "Not yet.""I guess you'll never understand." Graypaw sighed.

"You weren't born wild. It makes a big difference.You need to be born with warrior blood in your veins, or the feel of the wind in your whiskers. Kitties borninto Twoleg nests could never feel the same way."Rusty remembered the way he had felt in his dream. "That's not true!" he mewed indignantly.Graypaw did not reply. He suddenly stiffened midlick, one paw still raised, and sniffed the air. "I smellcats from my Clan," he hissed.

"You should go. They won't be pleased to find you hunting in our territory!"Rusty looked around, wondering how Graypaw knew any cat was approaching. He couldn't smellanything different on the leaf-scented breeze. But his fur stood on end at the note of urgency in Graypaw'svoice."Quick!" hissed Graypaw again. "Run!"Rusty prepared to spring into the bushes, not knowing which way was safe to jump.He was too late. A voice meowed behind him, firm and menacing. "What's going on here?"

Rusty turned to see a large gray she-cat strolling majestically out from the undergrowth. She wasmagnificent. White hairs streaked her muzzle, and an ugly scar parted the fur across her shoulders, but hersmooth gray coat shone like silver in the moonlight."Bluestar!" Beside Rusty, Graypaw crouched down and narrowed his eyes. He crouched even lowerwhen a second cat—a

handsome, golden tabby—followed the gray cat into the clearing."You shouldn't be so near Twolegplace, Graypaw!" growled the golden tabby angrily, narrowing hisgreen eyes.

"I know, Lionheart, I'm sorry." Graypaw looked down at his paws.Rusty copied Graypaw and crouched low to the forest floor, his ears twitching nervously. These catshad an air of strength he had never seen in any of his garden friends. Maybe what Smudge had warned himabout was true."Who is this?" asked the she-cat.Rusty flinched as she turned her gaze on him. Her piercing blue eyes made him feel even morevulnerable."He's no threat,"

mewed Graypaw quickly. "He's not another Clan warrior, just a Twoleg pet frombeyond our territories."Just a Twoleg pet! The words inflamed Rusty, but he held his tongue. The warning look in Bluestar'sstare told him that she had observed the anger in his eyes, and he looked away."This is Bluestar; she's leader of my Clan!" Graypaw hissed to Rusty under his breath. "And Lionheart.He's my mentor, which means he's training me to be a warrior."

"Thank you for the introduction, Graypaw," meowed Lionheart coolly.Bluestar was still staring at Rusty. "You fight well for a Twoleg pet," she meowed.Rusty and Graypaw exchanged confused glances. How could she know?"We have been watching you both," Bluestar went on, as if she had read their thoughts. "We wonderedhow you would deal with an intruder, Graypaw. You attacked him bravely."Graypaw looked pleased at Bluestar's praise."Sit up now, both of you!" Bluestar looked at Rusty. "You too, kittypet."

He sat up immediately andheld Bluestar's gaze evenly as she addressed him."You reacted well to the attack, kittypet. Graypaw is stronger than you, but you used your wits todefend yourself. And you turned to face him when he chased you. I've not seen a kittypet do that before."Rusty managed to nod his thanks, taken aback by such unexpected praise. Her next words surprised himeven more."I have been wondering how you would perform out here, beyond the Twolegplace.

We patrol thisborder frequently, so I have often seen you sitting on your boundary, staring out into the forest. And now, atlast, you

have dared to place your paws here." Bluestar stared at Rusty thoughtfully. "You do seem to have anatural hunting ability. Sharp eyes. You would have caught that mouse if you had not hesitated so long.""R-really?" Rusty stammered.Lionheart spoke now. His deep meow was respectful but insistent. "Bluestar, this is a kittypet.

Heshould not be hunting in ThunderClan territory. Send him home to his Twolegs!"Rusty prickled at Lionheart's dismissive words. "Send me home?" he mewed impatiently. Bluestar'swords had made him glow with pride. She had noticed him; she had been impressed by him. "But I've onlycome here to hunt for a mouse or two. I'm sure there's enough to go around."Bluestar had turned her head to acknowledge Lionheart's words. Now her gaze snapped back to Rusty.Her blue eyes were blazing with anger.

"There's never enough to go around," she spat. "If you didn't livesuch a soft, overfed life, you would know that!"Rusty was confused by Bluestar's sudden rage, but one glance at the horrified look on Graypaw's facewas enough to tell him he had spoken too freely. Lionheart stepped to his leader's side. Both warriors loomedover him now. Rusty looked into Bluestar's threatening stare and his pride dissolved. These were not cozyfireside cats he was dealing with—they were mean, hungry cats who were probably going to finish whatGraypaw had started.

Graypaw stared at the kittypet with a horrified look. "He's speaking to freely" He thought. "This is bad" "Well?" hissed Bluestar, her face only a mouse-length from the kittypet's. He flattened his ears, His fur prickleduncomfortably. "I am no threat to your Clan," the kittypet mewed, looking down at his trembling paws."You threaten our Clan when you take our food," yowled Bluestar. "You have plenty of food in yourTwoleg nest already. You come here only to hunt for sport. But we hunt to survive."

Graypaw watched as the kittypet stopped trembling, sat up, and straightened his ears. He raised his eyes to meet hers. "I had notthought of it that way before. I am sorry," he meowed solemnly. "I will not hunt here again."Bluestar let her hackles fall and signaled to Lionheart to step back. "You are an unusual kittypet,Rusty," she meowed.Graypaw's sighed relief and brought his ears back up. He heard the approval in Bluestar's voice andnoticed as she swapped a

meaningful glance with Lionheart. The look made him curious.

What flashedbetween the two of them? Quietly the kittpet asked, "Is survival here really so hard?""Our territory covers only part of the forest," answered Bluestar. "We compete with other Clans forwhat we have. And this year, late newleaf means prey is scarce.""Is your Clan very big?" The kittypet meowed, his eyes wide."Big enough," replied Bluestar. "Our territory can support us, but there is no prey left over."

"Are you all warriors, then?" Lionheart answered him. "Some are warriors. Some are too young or too old or too busy caring for kitsto hunt.""And you all live and share prey together?" Bluestar looked again at Lionheart. The golden tabby stared back at her steadily. At last she returnedher gaze to Rusty and meowed, "Perhaps you should find out these things for yourself. Would you like to joinThunderClan?"

Bluestar went on: "If you did, you would train with Graypaw to become a Clan warrior.""But kittypets can't be warriors!" Graypaw blurted out. "They don't have warrior blood!"A sad look clouded Bluestar's eyes. "Warrior blood," she echoed with a sigh. "Too much of that has been spilled lately." Bluestar fell silent and Lionheart meowed, "Bluestar is only offering you training, young kit. There is noguarantee you would become a full warrior.

It might prove too difficult for you. After all, you are used to acomfortable life."Rusty was stung by Lionheart's words. He swung his head around to face the golden tabby. "Why offerme the chance, then?"But it was Bluestar who answered. "You are right to question our motives, young one. The fact is,ThunderClan needs more warriors.""Understand that Bluestar does not make this offer lightly," warned Lionheart.

"If you wish to trainwith us, we will have to take you into our Clan. You must either live with us and respect our ways, or returnto your Twolegplace and never come back. You cannot live with a paw in each world."A cool breeze stirred the undergrowth, ruffling graypaw's fur. He shivered, not with the cold, but withexcitement at the incredible possibilities opening up in front for the kittypet."Are you wondering if it's worth giving up your comfortable kittypet

life?" asked Bluestar gently. "Butdo you realize the price you will pay for your warmth and food?"Rusty looked at her, puzzled.

Surely his encounter with these cats had proved to him just how easy andluxurious his life was."I can tell that you are still a tom," Bluestar added, "despite the Twoleg stench that clings to your fur.""What do you mean—still a tom?""You haven't yet been taken by the Twolegs to see the Cutter," meowed Bluestar gravely. "You wouldbe very different then. Not quite so keen to fight a Clan cat, I suspect!" Graypaw was confused. "The Clan may not be able to offer you such easy food or warmth," continued Bluestar.

"In the seasonof leaf-bare, nights in the forest can be cruel. The Clan will demand great loyalty and hard work. You will beexpected to protect the Clan with your life if necessary. And there are many mouths to feed. But the rewardsare great. You will remain a tom. You will be trained in the ways of the wild. You will learn what it is to be areal cat. The strength and the fellowship of the Clan will always be with you, even when you hunt alone." Graypaw's head reeled. Bluestar seemed to be offering the kittypet the life he had been living, but could he live like that for real?Lionheart interrupted his thoughts.

"Come, Bluestar, let's not waste any more time here. We must beready to join the other patrol at moonhigh. Tigerclaw will wonder what has become of us." He stood up andflicked his tail expectantly."Wait," The kittypet meowed. "Can I think about your offer?"Bluestar looked at him for a long moment and nodded. "Lionheart will be here tomorrow at sunhigh,"she told him. "Give him your answer then." Bluestar murmured a low signal, and in a single movement graypaw followed them and disappeared intothe undergrowth.

Rusty blinked. He stared—excited, uncertain—up past the ferns that encircled him, through the canopyof leaves, to the stars that glittered in the clear sky. The scent of the Clan cats still hung heavy in the eveningair. And as Rusty turned and headed for home, he felt a strange sensation inside him, tugging him back intothe depths of the forest. His fur prickled deliciously in the light wind, and the rustling leaves seemed towhisper his name into the shadows.

That morning, as Rusty slept off his night's wanderings, the mouse dream came again, even more vivid thanbefore. Free of his collar, beneath the moon, he stalked the timid creature. But this time he was aware ofbeing watched. Shining from the shadows of the forest he saw dozens of yellow eyes. The Clan cats hadentered his dream world.Rusty woke, blinking in the bright sunshine that was streaming across the kitchen floor.

His fur feltheavy and thick with warmth. His food bowl had been topped up, and his water bowl rinsed out and filledwith bitter-tasting Twoleg water. Rusty preferred drinking from puddles outside, but when it was hot, or hewas very thirsty, he had to admit it was easier to lap up the water indoors. Could he really abandon thiscomfortable life?He ate, then pushed his way out of the cat flap into the garden. The day promised to be warm, and thegarden was heavy with the smell of early blossoms."Hello, Rusty!" mewed a voice from the fence.

It was Smudge. "You should have been awake an hourago. The baby sparrows were out stretching their wings.""Did you catch any?" Rusty asked.Smudge yawned and licked his nose. "Couldn't be bothered. I'd already eaten enough at home.Anyway, why weren't you out earlier? Yesterday you were complaining about Henry sleeping his time away,and today you're not much better yourself."Rusty sat down on the cool earth beside the fence and curled his tail neatly over his front paws.

"I wasin the woods last night," he reminded his friend. At once he felt the blood stir in his veins and his fur stiffen.Smudge looked down at him, his eyes wide. "Oh, yes, I forgot! How was it? Did you catch anything? Ordid anything catch you?"Rusty paused, not sure how to tell his old friend what had happened. "I met some wild cats," he began."What!" Smudge was clearly shocked. "Did you get into a fight?""Sort of." Rusty could feel the energy surging through his body again as he recalled the strength andpower of the Clan cats.

"Were you hurt? What happened?" Smudge prompted him eagerly."There were three of them. Bigger and stronger than any of us.""And you fought all three of them!" Smudge interrupted, his tail twitching with excitement."No!" Rusty mewed hastily. "Just the

youngest one; the other two came later.""How come they didn't shred you to pieces?""They just warned me to leave their territory. But then..." Rusty hesitated.

"What!" mewed Smudge impatiently."They asked me to join their Clan."Smudge's whiskers quivered disbelievingly."They did!" Rusty insisted."Why would they do that?""I don't know," Rusty admitted. "I think they need extra paws in their Clan.""Sounds a bit odd to me," Smudge mewed doubtfully. "I wouldn't trust them if I were you."Rusty looked at Smudge. His black-and-white friend had never shown any interest in venturing into thewoods.

He was perfectly content living with his housefolk. He would never understand the restless longingthat Rusty's dreams stirred in him night after night."But I do trust them," Rusty purred softly. "And I've made up my mind. I'm going to join them."Smudge scrambled down from the fence and stood in front of Rusty. "Please don't go, Rusty," hemewed in alarm. "I might never see you again."Rusty nudged him affectionately with his head. "Don't worry. My housefolk will get another cat. You'llget on with him fine. You get along with everyone!"

"But it won't be the same!" Smudge wailed.Rusty twitched his tail impatiently. "That's just the point. If I stay around here till they take me to theCutter, I won't be the same either."Smudge looked puzzled. "The Cutter?" he echoed."The vet," Rusty explained. "To be altered, like Henry was."Smudge shrugged and stared down at his paws. "But Henry's all right," he mumbled. "I mean, I knowhe's a bit lazier now, but he's not unhappy. We could still have fun."Rusty felt his heart fill with sadness at the thought of leaving his friend.

"I'm sorry, Smudge. I'll missyou, but I have to go."Smudge didn't reply, but stepped forward and gently touched Rusty's nose with his own. "Fair enough. Ican see I can't stop you, but at least let's spend one more morning together."Rusty found himself enjoying the morning even more than usual, visiting his old haunts with Smudge,sharing words with the cats he had grown up with. Every one of his senses felt supercharged, as if he werepoised before a huge jump.

As sunhigh approached, Rusty grew more and more impatient to see

if Lionheartwould really be waiting for him. The idle buzz of meows from his old friends seemed to fade into thebackground as all his senses strained toward the woods.Rusty jumped down from his garden fence for the last time and crept into the woods. He had said hisgood-byes to Smudge. Now all his thoughts were focused on the forest and the cats who lived in it.

As he approached the spot where he had met with the Clan cats the night before, he sat down and tastedthe air. Tall trees shielded the ground from the midday sunshine, making it comfortably cool. Here and there apatch of sunlight shone through a gap in the leaves and lit up the forest floor. Rusty could smell the samecat-scent as last night, but he had no idea whether it was old or new. He lifted his head and sniffeduncertainly."You have a lot to learn," meowed a deep voice. "Even the tiniest Clan kit knows when another cat isnearby."

Rusty saw a pair of green eyes glinting from beneath a bramble bush. Now he recognized the scent: itwas Lionheart."Can you tell if I am alone?" asked the golden tabby, stepping into the light.Hastily, Rusty sniffed again. The scents of Bluestar and Graypaw were still there, but not as strong asthe previous night. Hesitantly, he mewed, "Bluestar and Graypaw aren't with you this time.""That's right," meowed Lionheart. "But someone else is."Rusty stiffened as a second Clan cat strode into the clearing."This is Whitestorm," purred Lionheart. "One of ThunderClan's senior warriors."

Rusty looked at the tom and felt his spine tingle with cold fear. Was this a trap? Long-bodied andmuscular, Whitestorm stood in front of Rusty and gazed down at him. His white coat was thick and unmarkedand his eyes were the yellow of sunbaked sand. Rusty flattened his ears warily, and tensed his muscles inpreparation for a fight."Relax, before your fear-scent brings unwanted attention," growled Lionheart. "We are here only totake you to our camp."Rusty sat very still, hardly daring to breathe, as Whitestorm stretched his nose forward and gave him acurious sniff."Hello, young one," murmured the white cat.

"I've heard a lot about you."Rusty dipped his head in greeting."Come, we can speak more once we are in the camp," ordered Lionheart, and, without pausing, he andWhitestorm leaped

away into the undergrowth. Rusty jumped to his paws and followed as quickly as hecould.The two warriors made no allowances for Rusty as they sped through the forest, and before long he wasstruggling to keep up. Their pace barely slowed as they led him over fallen trees that they cleared in a singleleap, but which Rusty had to scramble over paw by paw.

They passed through sharply fragrant pine trees,where they had to jump across deep gullies churned up by a Twoleg tree-eater. From the safety of his gardenfence, Rusty had often heard it roaring and snarling in the distance. One gully was too wide to jump,half-filled with slimy, foul-smelling water. The Clan cats waded through without hesitating.Rusty had never put a paw in water before. But he was determined not to show any signs of weakness,so he narrowed his eyes and followed, trying to ignore the uncomfortable wetness that soaked his belly fur.At last Lionheart and Whitestorm paused.

Rusty skidded to a halt behind them and stood panting while the two warriors stepped onto a rock that rested on the edge of a small ravine."We are very close to our camp now," meowed Lionheart.Rusty strained to see any signs of life—moving leaves, a glimpse of fur among the bushes below, but hiseyes saw nothing except the same undergrowth that covered the rest of the forest floor."Use your nose. You must be able to scent it," hissed Whitestorm impatiently.Rusty closed his eyes and sniffed. Whitestorm was right.

The scents here were very different from thecat-scent he was used to. The air smelled stronger, speaking of many, many different cats.He nodded thoughtfully and announced, "I can smell cats."Lionheart and Whitestorm exchanged amused looks."There will come a time, if you are accepted into the Clan, when you will know each cat-scent byname," Lionheart meowed. "Follow me!" He led the way nimbly down the boulders to the bottom of theravine, and pushed his way through a thick patch of gorse.

Rusty followed, and Whitestorm took up the rear.As his sides scraped against the prickly gorse, Rusty looked down and noticed that the grass beneath his pawswas flattened into a broad, strong-smelling track. This must be the main entrance into the camp, he

thought.Beyond the gorse, a clearing opened up. The ground at the center was bare, hard earth, shaped by manygenerations of pawsteps. This camp had been here a long time. The clearing was dappled by sunshine, and theair felt warm and still.Rusty looked around, his eyes wide.

There were cats everywhere, sitting alone or in groups, sharing foodor purring quietly as they groomed one another."Just after sunhigh, when the day is hottest, is a time for sharing tongues," Lionheart explained."Sharing tongues?" Rusty echoed."Clan cats always spend time grooming each other and sharing the news of the day," Whitestorm toldhim. "We call it sharing tongues. It is a custom that binds the members of the Clan together."The cats had obviously smelled Rusty's foreign scent, for heads began to turn and stare curiously in hisdirection.Suddenly shy of meeting any cat's gaze directly, Rusty looked around the clearing. It was edged withthick grass, dotted with treestumps and a fallen tree.

A thick curtain of ferns and gorse shielded the campfrom the rest of the woods."Over there," meowed Lionheart, flicking his tail toward an impenetrable-looking tangle of brambles,"is the nursery, where the kits are cared for."Rusty swiveled his ears toward the bushes. He couldn't see through the knot of prickly branches, but hecould hear the mewling of several kittens from somewhere inside. As he watched, a ginger she-cat squirmedout through a small gap in the front. That must be one of the queens, Rusty thought.A tabby queen with distinctive black markings appeared around the bramble bush. The two she-catsexchanged a friendly lick between the ears before the tabby slipped inside the nursery, murmuring to thesquealing kits.

"The care of our kits is shared by all of the queens," meowed Lionheart. "All cats serve the Clan.Loyalty to the Clan is the first law in our warrior code, a lesson you must learn quickly if you wish to staywith us.""Here comes Bluestar," meowed Whitestorm, sniffing the air.Rusty sniffed the air too, and was pleased that he was able to recognize the scent of the gray she-cat amoment before she appeared from the shadow of a large boulder that lay beside them at the head of theclearing."He came," Bluestar purred, addressing the warriors.Whitestorm replied, "Lionheart was convinced he

would not."Rusty noticed the tip of Bluestar's tail twitch impatiently. "Well, what do you think of him?" she asked.

"He kept up well on the return journey, despite his puny size," Whitestorm admitted. "He certainlyseems strong for a kittypet.""So it is agreed?" Bluestar looked at Lionheart and Whitestorm.Both cats nodded."Then I shall announce his arrival to the Clan." Bluestar leaped up onto the boulder and yowled, "Letall those cats old enough to catch their own prey join here beneath the Highrock for a Clan meeting."

Graypaw joined underneath the highrock as bluestar called her summons. he glanced and saw the kittypet with whitestorm and his mentor. "He came then" Graypaw thought. Graypaw waited and listened as bluestar spoke. "ThunderClan needs more warriors," she began. "Neverbefore have we had so few apprentices in training. It has been decided that ThunderClan will take in anoutsider to train as a warrior...."

Graypaw heard indignant mutterings erupt among the Clan cats, but Bluestar silenced them with a firmyowl. "I have found a cat who is willing to become an apprentice of ThunderClan.""Lucky to become an apprentice," caterwauled a loud voice above the ripple of shock that spreadthrough the cats. Graypaw craned his neck and saw longtail standing up and glaring defiantly at the leader.

Bluestar ignored him and addressed all of her Clan. "Lionheart and Whitestorm have met thisyoung cat, and they agree with me that we should train him with the other apprentices." There was silence for a moment. Graypaw was sure they must all be able to hear the kittypet's heart pulsing and smell his fear-scent.Now a deafening crescendo of caterwauling rose from the crowd.

"Where does he come from?""Which Clan does he belong to?""What a strange scent he carries! That's not the scent of any Clan I know!"Then one yowl in particular sounded out above the rest. "Look at his collar! He's a kittypet!" It was longtail again. "Once a kittypet, always a kittypet. This Clan needs wildborn warriors to defend it, notanother soft mouth to feed." Longtail continued to jeer at him. "Your collar is a mark of the Twolegs, and that noisy jingling willmake you a poor hunter at best. At worst, it will bring

the Twolegs into our territory, looking for the poor lostkittypet who fills the woods with his pitiful tinkling."

All the cats howled in agreement.Longtail went on, well aware that he had the support of his audience. "The noise of your treacherousbell will alert our enemies, even if your Twoleg stench doesn't!" Graypaw saw the kittypet flatten his ears, narrow his eyes and, hissing, leaped through thestartled cats to fling himself onto his tormentor.Longtail was completely unprepared for Rusty's attack. He staggered sideways, losing his footing on thehard-baked earth. Filled with rage and desperate to prove himself, The two cats werelocked in a screaming, writhing tussle that flipped and somersaulted around the clearing at the heart of thecamp.

The other cats including graypaw had to spring out of the way to avoid the screeching whirlwind of fur. Through the roaring of the blood in his ears, he could hear the cats around them wailing with excitement. And suddenly, with a loud snap, it was over.Longtail tumbled away from him. the kittypet scrambled to his paws and looked around. Longtail wascrouching three tail-lengths away. And, dangling from Longtail's mouth, Graypaw saw the collar, mangled andbroken.

At once, Bluestar leaped down from the Highrock and silenced the noisy crowd with a thunderouscaterwaul. The kittypet and Longtail remained fixed to the spot, gasping for breath. Clumps of fur hung from theirruffled coats. Longtail's left ear was badly torn, and blooddripped down his lean shoulders onto the dusty ground. They stared at each other, their hostility not yet spent.

Bluestar stepped forward and took the collar from Longtail. She placed it on the ground in front of herand meowed, "The newcomer has lost his Twoleg collar in a battle for his honor. StarClan has spoken itsapproval—this cat has been released from the hold of his Twoleg owners, and is free to join ThunderClan asan apprentice."Rusty looked at Bluestar and solemnly nodded his acceptance. He stood up and stepped forward into ashaft of sunshine, welcoming the warmth on his sore muscles. The pool of light blazed bright on his orangepelt, making his fur glow. Rusty lifted his head proudly and looked at the cats that surrounded him.

This timeno cat argued or jeered. He had shown himself to be a worthy opponent in battle.Bluestar approached Rusty and placed the shredded collar on the ground in front of him. She touchedhis ear gently with her nose. "You look like a brand of fire in this sunlight," she murmured. Her eyes flashedbriefly, as if her words had more meaning for her than Rusty knew. "You have fought well." Then she turnedto the Clan and announced, "From this day forward, until he has earned his warrior name, this apprentice willbe called Firepaw, in honor of his flame-colored coat."

She stepped back and, with the other cats, waited silently for his next move. Without hesitating, Rustyturned and kicked dust and grass over his collar as though burying his dirt.Longtail growled and limped out of the clearing toward a fern-shaded corner. The cats split into groups,murmuring to each other excitedly."Hey, Firepaw!"Rusty heard Graypaw's friendly voice behind him. Firepaw! A thrill of pride surged through him at thesound of his new name. He turned to greet the gray apprentice with a welcoming sniff."Great fight, Firepaw!" mewed Graypaw. "Especially for a kittypet! Longtail is a warrior, although heonly finished his training two moons ago. That scar you left on his ear won't let him forget you in a hurry.You've spoiled his good looks, that's for sure.""Thanks, Graypaw," Firepaw replied.

"He put up quite a fight, though!" He licked his front paw andbegan to wipe clean the deep scratch that stung above his eye. As he washed he heard his new name again,echoing among the meows of the cats."Firepaw!""Hey, Firepaw!""Welcome, young Firepaw!"Firepaw closed his eyes for a moment and let the voices wash over him."Good name, too!" Graypaw mewed approvingly, jolting him awake.

Firepaw looked around. "Where did Longtail creep off to?""I think he was heading toward Spottedleaf's den." Graypaw tipped his head toward the fern-enclosedcorner Longtail had disappeared into. "She's our medicine cat. Not bad-looking either. Younger and a lotprettier than most—"A low yowl next to the two cats stopped Graypaw midspeech. They both turned, and Firepawrecognized the powerful gray tabby cat who had sat behind Graypaw earlier.

"Darkstripe," mewed Graypaw, dipping his head respectfully.The

sleek tom looked at Firepaw for a moment. "Lucky your collar snapped when it did. Longtail is ayoung warrior, but I can't imagine him being beaten by a kittypet!" He spat the word kittypet scornfully, thenturned and stalked off.

Chapter 2

Firepaw and Graypaw retraced their steps to ThunderClan territory. Both cats were bone-weary and wetthrough, but Firepaw kept up the pace. The storm was beginning to move away. A ThunderClan patrol wouldbe out soon and on Yellowfang's trail. They had to find her first.The sky was still dark, even though the black thunderclouds were beginning to roll away toward thehorizon. Firepaw guessed that it must be nearly sunset.

"Why don't we head straight into ShadowClan territory?" suggested Graypaw as they ran down thesteep hillside into Fourtrees."We need to pick up Yellowfang's scent first," Firepaw explained. "I just hope it won't lead to theShadowClan camp."Graypaw glanced sideways at his friend, but didn't reply.They headed back over the stream, into ThunderClan territory. There was no scent of Yellowfang untilthey crossed into the oak woods close to the camp.Now that the rain had finally stopped, the scents around them were beginning to return.

Firepaw hopedthat the rain had not washed away Yellowfang's trail completely. He stopped and brushed at a fern with thetip of his nose, and recognized the familiar smell. Yellowfang's fear-scent prickled in his nostrils. "She camethis way!" he meowed.He pushed his way through the wet undergrowth. Graypaw followed. The rain was easing, and thethunder was fading into the distance. Time was running out. Firepaw pushed on faster.To his dismay, he realized Yellowfang's scent was indeed leading them straight to ShadowClan territory.His heart sank. Did this mean Tigerclaw's accusations were true?

Firepaw began to hope that each new smellwould take them in a different direction, but the trail was unfaltering.They arrived at the Thunderpath and halted. Several monsters roared by, throwing up fountains of dirtywater. The two cats hung back from the edge of the wide, gray track until there was a gap. Then they racedacross the path and into ShadowClan territory.The scent markers that lined the border made Firepaw's paws tingle.Graypaw halted and

looked around nervously.

"I always thought I'd have a few more warriors with mewhen I finally entered ShadowClan territory," he confessed."Not afraid, are you?" Firepaw murmured."Aren't you? My mother warned me about the stench of ShadowClan many times.""My mother never taught me such things," Firepaw replied. But for the first time he was relieved thathis fur was so wet that it clung to his body—Graypaw might not notice the way it was bristling fearfully alonghis spine.

The two cats prowled onward, alert to every sight and sound. Graypaw was on the lookout forShadowClan patrols, and Firepaw for the ThunderClan party he knew must come soon.Yellowfang's scent-trail led them steadily into the heart of ShadowClan's hunting grounds. The woodshere were gloomy, the undergrowth crowded with nettles and brambles."I can't smell her," complained Graypaw. "It's too wet.""It's there," Firepaw assured him."I can smell that though," Graypaw spat suddenly.

"What?" Firepaw hissed. He stopped, alarmed."Kitscent. There's kit blood here!"Firepaw sniffed again, seeking out the smell of ThunderClan offspring. "I smell it too," he agreed. "Andsomething else!" He flicked his tail down sharply, warning Graypaw to keep quiet. Then, silently, he signaledwith his whiskers toward a blackened ash tree up ahead.Graypaw twitched his ears questioningly. Firepaw gave him a tiny nod. Yellowfang was shelteringbehind the wide, split trunk.Instinctively the two cats separated, each moving toward the tree, one on either side. They crept overthe soft forest floor, using all the tricks of basic training, stepping lightly, keeping their bodies low.

Then they leaped.Yellowfang yowled with surprise as the two cats landed beside her and pinned her to the ground. Shestruggled free, spitting, and backed into a sheltered hollow at the base of the trunk. Firepaw and Graypawmoved forward, blocking her way out."I knew ThunderClan would blame me!" she hissed, her eyes flashing with all her old hostility."Where are the kits?" Firepaw demanded."We can smell their blood!" spat Graypaw. "Have you harmed them?""I don't have them," snarled Yellowfang angrily. "I've come to find them and take them back. I stoppedbecause I smelled blood too.

But they're not here."Firepaw and Graypaw looked at one another."I don't have them!" insisted Yellowfang."Why did you run away, then? Why did you kill Spottedleaf?" Graypaw asked the questions Firepawcouldn't bring himself to say out loud."Spottedleaf is dead?" There was no mistaking the shock in Yellowfang's voice.Relief washed over Firepaw. "You didn't know?" he croaked."How could I? I left the camp as soon as I heard the kits were missing."

Graypaw looked suspicious, but Firepaw could hear the truth in her voice."I know who has taken the kits," she continued. "I smelled his scent near the nursery.""Who was it?" Firepaw asked."Clawface—one of Brokenstar's warriors. And as long as the kits are with ShadowClan, they're in greatdanger.""But surely even ShadowClan wouldn't harm kits!" Firepaw protested."Don't be so sure," spat Yellowfang. "Brokenstar intends to use them as warriors.""But they are only three moons old!" Graypaw gasped."That hasn't stopped him before. He has been training kits as young as three moons since he becameleader.

At five moons he sends them out as warriors!""Surely they'd be too small to fight!" Firepaw protested. But in his mind's eye he pictured the undersizeShadowClan apprentices he had seen at the Gathering. They weren't just small; they were kits!Yellowfang hissed scornfully, "Brokenstar doesn't care about that. He has plenty more kits to spare, andif they run out, he can steal them from other Clans!" Her voice was filled with rage. "After all, we're talkingabout a cat who killed kits from his own Clan!"Firepaw and Graypaw were stunned."If he killed ShadowClan's kits, why wasn't he punished?" Firepaw asked at last.

"Because he lied," growled Yellowfang. Bitterness made her voice hard. "He accused me of theirmurder, and ShadowClan believed him!"Firepaw suddenly understood. "Is that why you were driven out of ShadowClan?" he asked. "You haveto come back with us and tell all this to Bluestar.""Not before I have rescued your kits!" Yellowfang spat.Firepaw lifted his head and sniffed the air. The rain had stopped, and the wind was dying down. TheThunderClan patrol would be well on its way.

They were not safe here.Graypaw still seemed shocked by Yellowfang's accusation. "How could a leader kill kits from his

ownClan?" he demanded."Brokenstar insisted on training them too hard and too young. He took two of the kits away for battlepractice." Yellowfang took a deep, wheezing breath. "They were only four moons old. They were alreadydead when he brought them back to me. They bore the scratches and bites of a full warrior, not ofapprentices. He must have fought them himself.

There was nothing I could do. When their mother came tosee them, Brokenstar was with me. He said that he had found me standing over their dead bodies." Her voicecracked and she looked away."Why didn't you tell her it was Brokenstar?" Firepaw asked in disbelief.Yellowfang shook her head. "I couldn't." "Why not?"The old she-cat hesitated. When she spoke, her voice was heavy with regret. "Brokenstar isShadowClan's leader.

Noble Raggedstar was his father. His word is law."Firepaw looked away and the three cats sat in silence for a moment. Then Firepaw meowed, "We'llrescue the kits together. Tonight. But we can't stay here. I can smell the ThunderClan patrol coming." Hepaused. "If Tigerclaw is with them, Yellowfang doesn't stand a chance. He'll kill her before we can explain."Yellowfang looked at him, alert and determined again. "There's peat this way; it'll be wet after therain," she told him. "Our scents will be disguised there."She leaped into a clump of ferns and Firepaw and Graypaw quickly followed her.

They could hear therustling of undergrowth in the distance now. It was no longer the wind that disturbed the bushes, but anapproaching patrol, no doubt hungry for revenge and fired up by Tigerclaw's lies.An eerie stillness settled over the woods, and a thin fog was beginning to gather between the tree trunks.Firepaw shook the droplets off his coat and impatiently pulled a burr off his chest.Yellowfang led them onward.

The ground grew soggier, and their paws began to sink into the soft peat.The musty smell choked Firepaw's nostrils, but at least it would mask their own trail. Behind them, the noiseof cats grew louder."Quick, under here," Yellowfang urged, ducking under a broad-leaved bush. The three cats crouchedbeneath it, drawing in their tails. Firepaw kept as still as he could, trying to ignore the rank wetness of theground seeping into his belly fur, and listening to the rustling of the ThunderClan patrol as it came nearer

andnearer.

Firepaw could tell there were several cats in the patrol, traveling fast. He couldn't recognize the individualscents of the cats through the earthy bog odors, but he knew it was ThunderClan. He held his breath as thepawsteps raced past and away."Are we really going to try to rescue the kits from ShadowClan alone?" whispered Graypaw.Yellowfang answered him first. "I might be able to find us some help from inside ShadowClan.

Not allthe cats support Brokenstar."Firepaw pricked up his ears and Graypaw flicked his tail in surprise."When he became leader," Yellowfang explained, "Brokenstar forced the elders to leave the security ofthe inner camp. They had to live on the boundary and hunt for themselves. These are cats who have grown upwith the warrior code. Some of them might help us."Firepaw stared into her old eyes, thinking quickly. "And I might be able to persuade the ThunderClanhunting party to help us too," he meowed. "If I can speak to them before they see Yellowfang, I might be ableto make them believe her story. Graypaw, you wait at the dead ash, where we smelled the kit blood, till oneof us returns."Graypaw looked worried.

"But do you really trust Yellowfang to bring back help?" he murmured toFirepaw."You must trust me," growled Yellowfang. "I will return."Graypaw looked at Firepaw, who nodded.Without another word Yellowfang sprang past the two apprentices and disappeared into the bushes."Have we done the right thing?" asked Graypaw."I don't know," Firepaw admitted. "If we have, we are heroes and the kits are safe. If we are wrong,then we are as good as dead."Firepaw sprinted after the patrol, around brambles, past gorse, and through nettles.

The trail was easy tofollow. The angry ThunderClan cats weren't trying to disguise their presence in ShadowClan's territory.Overhead, the thick layer of cloud had finally rolled away. Beyond the treetops, Silverpelt glitteredacross the night sky. The moon was just rising, but its cold light couldn't pierce the mist that clung to theshadowy undergrowth.Firepaw concentrated on the scent from up ahead. He could smell Whitestorm. He sniffed again.Tigerclaw wasn't with them.

He raced to catch up and skidded to a halt behind the band of ThunderClan cats.The warriors turned and glared at him, fur bristling, ears flattened aggressively. Darkstripe was withthem and the young she-cat Mousefur, as well as the tabby warrior Runningwind. Mousefur wasn't the only she-cat in the patrol—Willowpelt was there too."Firepaw!" growled Whitestorm. "What are you doing here?"Firepaw gasped for breath. "Bluestar sent me!" he panted. "She wanted me to find Yellowfangbefore—"Whitestorm interrupted him. "Ah!" he meowed.

"Bluestar told me I might find a friend out here. Now Iunderstand what she meant." He looked thoughtfully at Firepaw."Is Tigerclaw nearby?" Firepaw asked, feeling a tingle of pride at their shared gaze.Whitestorm looked at him curiously. "Bluestar insisted she needed him to remain at camp, to protect theremaining kits."Firepaw nodded quickly, relieved. He meowed urgently, "Whitestorm, I need your help. I can lead youto the kits. Graypaw is waiting for me. We plan to rescue them tonight. Will you come?""Of course we'll come!" The warriors flicked their tails with excitement."It will mean raiding the ShadowClan camp," Firepaw warned."Can you lead us there?" asked Runningwind eagerly."No, but Yellowfang can.

And she has promised to bring help from her old allies in the camp."Mousefur glared at him and thrashed her tail angrily. "You have found Yellowfang?" she hissed."I don't understand," meowed Whitestorm, puzzled. "The traitor is going to help rescue the kits shestole?"Firepaw took a deep breath to calm himself, then looked steadily into Whitestorm's eyes. "Yellowfangdidn't take them," he meowed. "Nor did she murder Spottedleaf. She wants to help us rescue our kits."Whitestorm stared back at him, then blinked slowly. "Lead the way, Firepaw," he ordered.Graypaw was waiting by the ash tree, pacing restlessly around its rotten trunk. He stopped as soon as hesaw the patrol emerge from the mist and twitched his whiskers in greeting."Any sign of Yellowfang?" Firepaw asked.

"Not yet," answered Graypaw."We don't know how far it is to the ShadowClan camp," Firepaw pointed out quickly, feelingWhitestorm stiffen beside him. "She may be on her way back right now.""Or she might be happily sharing tongues with her ShadowClan comrades

while we sit here like foolswaiting to be ambushed!" meowed Graypaw.Whitestorm watched the two apprentices. His ears flicked uneasily. "Firepaw?" he prompted."She will come back," Firepaw promised.

"Well said, young Firepaw." Yellowfang stalked out from behind the ash tree and sat down. "You'renot the only one who can sneak up on someone," she meowed at Firepaw. "Remember the day we met? Youwere looking in the wrong direction that time too."Three other ShadowClan cats appeared from behind the tree and settled themselves calmly on eitherside of Yellowfang. The ThunderClan cats bristled, alert and suspicious.Both Clans stared silently at each other. Firepaw fidgeted uncomfortably, unsure what to do now.

Eventually one of the ShadowClan cats, a gray tom, spoke. His long body was skinny, and his fur looked dull."We have come to help you, not to harm you. You have come for your kits; we will help you rescue them.""What's in it for you?" asked Whitestorm warily."We want your help to get rid of Brokenstar. He has broken the warrior code, and ShadowClan issuffering.""So it's that simple, is it?" growled Runningwind. "We just drop into your camp, snatch the kits, killyour leader, and go home.""You will not meet as much resistance as you think," murmured the gray tom.Yellowfang stood up. "Let me introduce my old friends,"she meowed, weaving her way around theShadowClan cats. She brushed past the gray tom.

"This is Ashfur; he is one of the Clan elders."And this is Nightpelt, a senior warrior before Raggedstar was killed." She circled a battered black tom,who nodded at them."And this is one of our elder queens, Dawncloud. Two of her kits died driving out WindClan."Dawncloud, a small tabby, meowed in greeting. "I do not wish to lose any more of my kits," she toldthem.Whitestorm gave his chest a quick lick to smooth down his fur. "You are clearly skilled warriors if youmanaged to creep up on us like that.

But are there enough of you? We need to know what we'll face when weraid the ShadowClan camp.""The old and sick of ShadowClan are slowly starving," meowed Ashfur. "The casualties among our kitsare more than we can cope with.""But if ShadowClan is a mess," burst out Darkstripe, "how come you have shown so much strengthlately? And why is Brokenstar still your

leader?""Brokenstar is surrounded by a small group of elite warriors," answered Ashfur. "They are the ones tofear, because they would die for him without question.

The other warriors obey his orders only because theyare frightened. They will fight by his side as long as they think Brokenstar is going to win. If they thought hewould lose..."""They would fight against him, not for him!" Darkstripe finished the elder's words in disgust. "Whatsort of loyalty is that?"The hackles of the ShadowClan cats began to rise."Our Clan was not always like this," Yellowfang interrupted. "When Raggedstar led ShadowClan, we were feared for our strength. But in those days our strength came from the warrior code and Clan loyalty, notfrom fear and bloodlust."

The old medicine cat sighed. "If only Raggedstar had lived longer.""How did Raggedstar die?" asked Whitestorm curiously. "There were so many rumors at theGatherings, but no one seemed to know for sure."Yellowfang's eyes clouded with sorrow. "He was ambushed by a warrior patrol from another Clan."Whitestorm nodded thoughtfully. "Yes, that is what most cats seemed to think. These are bad timesindeed, when leaders are picked off in the dark, instead of open and honorable battle."Firepaw frowned, his mind racing over different battle plans. "Is there any way of taking the kitswithout alerting the whole Clan?" he asked.

Dawncloud answered him. "They are very closely guarded. Brokenstar will be expecting ThunderClanto try to take them. You won't be able to steal them in secret. Open attack is your only hope.""Then we must concentrate our attack on Brokenstar and his inner guard," meowed Whitestorm.Yellowfang had a suggestion. "The ShadowClan warriors should lead me into the ShadowClan camp.They could say they had captured me. We have to make sure Brokenstar and his warriors are out of theirdens.

News of my capture will bring them into the clearing. Once they're all out in the open, I'll give thesignal for you to attack."Whitestorm was silent for a moment. Then he nodded, his face grave as he committed his warriors to theattack. "Very well, Yellowfang," he meowed. "Please lead the way to the ShadowClan camp." Yellowfang turned and pushed her way into the bracken. Whitestorm and the others followed her.Firepaw was tingling with

excitement. He didn't feel the damp chill in the air, and his weariness waslong forgotten.

Yellowfang guided them to a small hollow surrounded by thick undergrowth and pointed out theentrance to the ShadowClan camp. The tangled mass of brambles looked very different from the neat gorsetunnel that led into the ThunderClan camp. The camp boundary was full of holes and gaps and the stench ofrotting meat wafted toward them."You eat crow food?" whispered Graypaw, curling his lip."Our warriors are used for attacking, not hunting," replied Ashfur. "We eat whatever we can find.""ThunderClan, hide in that clump of bracken over there," hissed Yellowfang. "It's full of toadstools thatwill disguise your scent. Wait here till you hear me call."She stepped back to let the other ShadowClan cats lead the way, tucking herself into the center of theirgroup as though she were their prisoner.

They headed silently into the camp.The ThunderClan cats settled themselves among the toadstools, tense and alert. Firepaw could feel hiscoat prickling. He looked at Graypaw beside him. The thick fur on the back of his friend's neck was standingon end, and Firepaw could hear him panting with suppressed excitement.Suddenly yowling erupted from the ShadowClan camp. Without hesitating, the ThunderClan cats sprangfrom their hiding places and raced through the entrance.Yellowfang, Ashfur, Dawncloud, and Nightpelt were in a well-trodden, muddy clearing, wrestling withsix vicious-looking warriors. Firepaw recognized Brokenstar and his deputy, Blackfoot, among them. Thewarriors looked hungry and battle-scarred, but Firepaw could see the hard muscles pounding beneath theirpatchy fur.

Around the edge of the clearing, groups of scrawny cats stared uncertainly at the mayhem. Their skinnybodies seemed to recoil at the violence, while their dull eyes looked on, shocked and confused. Out of thecorner of his eye, Firepaw saw Runningnose back away and hide beneath a bush.At Whitestorm's nodded signal, the ThunderClan cats leaped into the battle.Firepaw grasped a silver tabby with his claws, but was shaken loose. He tumbled over and theShadowClan warrior turned on him and gripped him with claws as sharp as blackthorns. Firepaw managed totwist and sink his teeth

deep into the cat's flesh.

The warrior's yowl told him he had found a tender spot, andhe bit harder. The warrior screeched again, ripping himself free, and ran off into the bushes.Firepaw stood up. A young ShadowClan apprentice leaped at him from the edge of the camp, its softkitten fur fluffed up with fear.Firepaw sheathed his claws and batted him away easily. "This is not your battle," he hissed. Whitestorm already had Blackfoot pinned to the ground. He gave him a vicious bite and the injureddeputy raced away toward the camp entrance and out into the safety of the forest."Firepaw!" Firepaw heard Dawncloud screech his name.

"Watch out! Clawface is—" He didn't hearthe rest. A heavily built brown cat crashed into him. Clawface! Firepaw dug his claws into the ground andwhirled around to fight. The warrior that killed Spottedleaf! Rage surged through him and he flung himselfonto the brown tom.Firepaw pushed the warrior to the ground and pressed his head into the dirt. Blinded by fury, heprepared to sink his teeth into Clawface's neck. But before he could deal his death blow, Whitestormknocked him aside and grasped the ShadowClan warrior."ThunderClan warriors do not kill unless they have to," he growled in Firepaw's ear.

"We just need tolet them know not to show their faces here again!" He gave Clawface a fierce bite that sent him screamingout of the camp.Still raging, Firepaw looked around wildly. Brokenstar's warriors had gone.An angry screech sounded from behind Graypaw. Graypaw leaped out of the way and Firepaw sawYellowfang gripping Brokenstar with muddy, bloodstained paws. His body bled from several wounds. His earswere flattened against his head, and his whiskers were drawn back as he crouched, flattened beneathYellowfang's powerful grasp."I never thought you would be harder to kill than my father!" he snarled up at her.Yellowfang recoiled as if she had been stung by a bee, her face twisted suddenly by shock and grief.

Sheloosened her grip on Brokenstar, and instantly he threw her aside with a twist of his powerful body."You killed Raggedstar?" Yellowfang wailed, her eyes wide with disbelief.Brokenstar eyed her coldly. "You found his body. Didn't you recognize my fur between

his claws?"Yellowfang stared in horror as he continued. "He was a soft and foolish leader. He deserved to die.""No!" hissed Yellowfang, her head dropping. Then she gave herself a shake. She looked up atBrokenstar, arching her back. "And Brightflower's kits? Did they deserve to die too?" she rasped.

Brokenstar growled and hurled himself at Yellowfang, forcing her onto her belly. Yellowfang didn'teven attempt to struggle against his thorn-sharp claws. Firepaw saw with alarm that her eyes were glazed withsadness."Those kits were weak," Brokenstar hissed, bending his face toward Yellowfang's ear. "They wouldhave been no use to ShadowClan. If I hadn't killed them, some other warrior would have."A wail of grief went up from a black-and-white ShadowClan queen. Brokenstar ignored her. "I shouldhave killed you when I had the chance," he spat at Yellowfang. "It seems I must have some of my father'ssoftness. I was a fool to let you leave ShadowClan alive!" He lunged, teeth bared, ready to sink them into herneck.

Firepaw was quicker. He jumped onto Brokenstar's back before he could clamp his jaws shut. Firepawdug his claws into the matted tabby fur and pulled him off the exhausted queen, flinging him to the edge ofthe clearing.Brokenstar twisted around in midair to land on his feet and looked into Firepaw's eyes, spitting viciously. "Don't waste your time, apprentice! I've shared dreams with StarClan. You will have to kill menine times over before I join them. Do you really think you're strong enough for that?" His eyes glowed withconfidence and defiance.Firepaw stared back at him. His belly tightened.

Brokenstar was a Clan leader! How on earth could heexpect to defeat him? But the watching ShadowClan cats had begun to pad slowly toward their defeatedleader, snarling and hissing with hatred. They were battered and half-starved, but Brokenstar wasoutnumbered, and he seemed to realize this with a nervous flick of his tail. He crouched and backed awaythrough the bushes. His eyes glittered menacingly from the shadows, his gaze finding Firepaw through thecrowd."This isn't over, apprentice," he hissed before he turned and vanished into the forest after his brokenwarriors.Firepaw looked to Whitestorm. "Should we go after

them?" he meowed.The warrior shook his head.

"I think they got the message that they are not welcome here."Nightpelt, the ShadowClan warrior, nodded in agreement. "Leave them. If they dare to show their faceshere again, ShadowClan will be strong enough by then to tackle them alone."The rest of ShadowClan was huddled together in the ruins of their camp, as if numbed by the realizationthat their leader had gone. It will take time to rebuild this Clan, Firepaw thought."The kits!"Firepaw heard Graypaw's meow from a far corner of the clearing. He rushed over to his friend,Mousefur and Whitestorm bounding at his heels. As they approached, they could hear the pitiful mewling ofkits coming from beneath a pile of leaves and twigs.

Quickly Graypaw and Mousefur dug down through thefoliage until they had uncovered the missing ThunderClan kits at the bottom of a small pit."Are they okay?" demanded Whitestorm, his tail twitching with anxiety."They're fine," replied Graypaw. "Most have only a few scratches. But that little tabby has a prettynasty wound on his ear. Can you take a look, Yellowfang?"The old she-cat was licking her own wounds, but at Graypaw's call she raced to the side of the pit,where Graypaw had carefully deposited the tabby kit.Firepaw helped Graypaw to lift out the rest of the kits. The last one was gray, like the embers of an oldfire.

She mewled and squirmed as Firepaw placed her on the ground. Mousefur gathered all the kits to her andcomforted them with licks and caresses.Yellowfang looked closely at the torn ear. "We need to stop this bleeding," she meowed.Runningnose stepped out of the shadows. His forepaw was coated in a layer of cobwebs, which hesilently passed to Yellowfang. She nodded her thanks and began to treat the kit's wound.Nightpelt approached the group of ThunderClan cats. "You helped ShadowClan rid itself of a brutal anddangerous leader, and we are grateful. But it is time you left our camp and returned to your own. I promiseyour hunting grounds will be free of ShadowClan warriors as long as we can find enough food in our ownterritory."

Whitestorm nodded. "Hunt in peace for one moon, Nightpelt. ThunderClan knows you need time torebuild your Clan." He turned

to Yellowfang. "And you, Yellowfang?" he asked. "Do you wish to return withus, or stay here with your old comrades?"Yellowfang looked up at him. "I will make the journey back with you." She glanced at a deep gash onWhitestorm's hind leg. "You will need a medicine cat, for yourself as well as your kits.""Thank you," purred Whitestorm.

He signaled to the ThunderClan cats with a sweep of his tail and ledthem out of the clearing. Mousefur and Willowpelt helped the kits, who stumbled along, exhausted andbewildered. Yellowfang walked close to the wounded tabby kit, lifting him by the scruff of his neck everytime he slipped. Firepaw and Graypaw followed them through the brambles, past the camp scent-line and outinto the forest.The moon was still rising in the quiet sky as the ThunderClan party began the long trudge home, whilearound them showers of brown leaves fluttered to the forest floor.

Chapter 3

Buoyed up with relief at being home again, Firepaw and Graypaw sprinted ahead of the patrol into theThunderClan camp. Frostfur was lying in the middle of the clearing, her head resting sadly on her paws. Asthe two apprentices bounded in she lifted her nose and sniffed the air. "My kits!" she cried. She leaped upand raced past Firepaw and Graypaw to meet the rest of the party as they emerged from the tunnel.The kits rushed over to Frostfur and nuzzled into her side. She curled her soft body around them andlicked them each in turn, purring loudly.Yellowfang hung back at the camp entrance and looked on silently.Bluestar strode up to the returning patrol. She glanced fondly at Frostfur and her kits and then turnedher eyes to Whitestorm. "Are they all right?" she asked."They're fine," meowed Whitestorm.

"Well done, Whitestorm. ThunderClan honors you."Whitestorm bent his head to accept her praise, and added, "But it was thanks to this apprentice that wefound them."Firepaw lifted his head and tail proudly, about to speak, but Tigerclaw's accusing snarl sounded fromacross the clearing."Why did you bring back the traitor?" The dark warrior stalked up to the patrol and stood beside hisleader."She is no traitor," Firepaw insisted. He looked around the camp. The rest of the cats had quicklygathered in the clearing to see the kits and congratulate the hunting party. Some of them had spottedYellowfang and were eyeing her with looks of pure hatred."She killed Spottedleaf," spat Longtail.

"Look between Spottedleaf's claws," Graypaw suggested. "You will find the brown fur of Clawface,not Yellowfang's gray fur!"Bluestar nodded at Mousefur, who darted away from the crowd, toward the spot where Spottedleaf'sbody lay, waiting for its dawn burial. The Clan waited in tense silence till she returned."Graypaw is right," Mousefur panted, rushing back to the clearing. "Spottedleaf was not attacked by agray cat."A murmur of surprise rippled through the crowd."But that doesn't mean she didn't help to take the kits!" hissed Tigerclaw."Without Yellowfang we never would have

recovered the kits!" Firepaw spat, his exhaustion makinghim impatient. "She knew that a ShadowClan warrior had taken them.

She was hunting for them when I found her. She risked her life returning to the ShadowClan camp. It was Yellowfang who thought up the battle planthat got us into the ShadowClan camp and gave us a chance to defeat Brokenstar!"The cats listened to Firepaw's words, astonished."He's right," Whitestorm meowed. "Yellowfang is a friend.""I'm glad to hear it," murmured Bluestar, catching Firepaw's eye.Frostfur's anxious meow sounded from the crowd. "Is Brokenstar dead?" she asked."No, he escaped," Whitestorm told her. "But he will never lead ShadowClan again."Frostfur sighed in relief and returned to nuzzling her kits.Whitestorm looked at Bluestar. "I promised ShadowClan we would leave them in peace until nextfullmoon," he explained.

"Brokenstar's leadership has left their Clan in chaos."Bluestar nodded. "That was a wise and generous offer," she meowed approvingly. The ThunderClanleader walked past Whitestorm and the rest of the patrol and approached Yellowfang. Yellowfang loweredher eyes as Bluestar touched the gray cat's rough coat with her nose."Yellowfang, I wish you to replace Spottedleaf as medicine cat to ThunderClan," Bluestar meowed."I'm sure you'll find all her supplies as she left them."The other cats began to murmur to each other, tails flicking with excitement. Yellowfang looked aroundat them anxiously and said nothing.Frostfur glanced at the other queens before she met Yellowfang's gaze and slowly nodded her approval.

Yellowfang bent her head respectfully to the white cat before addressing her new leader. "Thank you,Bluestar. ShadowClan is not the Clan I once knew. ThunderClan is my Clan now."Firepaw felt a surge of satisfaction that the old she-cat he had come to love would be his Clan'smedicine cat from now on. Then his tail dropped as he realized that he would never again find Spottedleaf inher clearing, the sunlight gleaming on her soft fur, her amber eyes shining in welcome."Where's Ravenpaw?" meowed Bluestar suddenly, jolting Firepaw out of his bittersweetremembrances."Yes," Tigerclaw chimed in, "where is my apprentice? Strange that he should disappear along withBrokenstar." He looked meaningfully around

the Clan.

"If you think he might have been helping Brokenstar," Firepaw meowed boldly, "then you are wrong!"Tigerclaw stiffened, a menacing gleam in his yellow eyes."Ravenpaw is dead," Firepaw went on, dropping his head as if weighed down with grief. "We found hisbody in ShadowClan territory. From the scents around him, he must have been slain by a ShadowClanpatrol." He looked at Bluestar. "I will tell you everything later," he promised.Yellowfang shot Firepaw a questioning look. Firepaw returned her gaze with a silent plea for her to holdher tongue. She twitched her ears briefly in understanding and looked away.

"I never said that Ravenpaw was a traitor," hissed Tigerclaw. He paused and allowed an expression ofsorrow to cloud his eyes before he turned to address the rest of the Clan. "Ravenpaw might have made a finewarrior. His death has come too soon, and his loss will be felt by many of us for a long time."Empty words! thought Firepaw bitterly. What would Tigerclaw say if he knew that Ravenpaw was safe,far beyond the forest, catching rats with Barley? Bluestar broke the silence. "We will miss Ravenpaw, but we shall mourn him tomorrow. First there isanother ritual that must be performed—one, I know, that Ravenpaw would have taken pleasure in." Sheturned to Firepaw and Graypaw.

"You have shown great courage tonight. Did they fight well, Whitestorm?"she asked."Like warriors," Whitestorm replied solemnly.Bluestar met his yellow-eyed gaze and gave a slight nod. Then she lifted her chin and fixed her eyes onSilverpelt's swath of stars. Her voice rang out, clear and measured in the hushed woods. "I, Bluestar, leaderof ThunderClan, call upon my warrior ancestors to look down on these two apprentices. They have trainedhard to understand the ways of your noble code, and I commend them to you as warriors in their turn." Shelooked down at Firepaw and Graypaw, narrowing her eyes. "Firepaw, Graypaw, do you promise to upholdthe warrior code and to protect and defend this Clan, even at the cost of your lives?"Firepaw felt something stir within him, a fire that burned in his belly and rang in his ears. He suddenlyfelt that everything he had done for the Clan so far—all the prey he had stalked, all the enemy warriors hehad fought—had been for the

sake of this single moment. "I do," he replied steadily."I do," echoed Graypaw, his fur bristling with excitement.

"Then by the powers of StarClan I give you your warrior names: Graypaw, from this moment you willbe known as Graystripe. StarClan honors your bravery and your strength, and we welcome you as a fullwarrior of ThunderClan." Bluestar stepped forward and rested her muzzle on top of Graystripe's bowed head.He bent lower to give her shoulder a respectful lick, then straightened up and walked over to join the otherwarriors.Bluestar stood and studied Firepaw for a long moment before speaking. "Firepaw, from this momentyou will be known as Fireheart. StarClan honors your bravery and your strength, and we welcome you as afull warrior of ThunderClan." She touched her muzzle to his head and murmured,

"Fireheart, I am proud tohave you as my warrior. Serve your Clan well, young one."Fireheart's muscles were trembling so much that he could hardly stoop to lick Bluestar's shoulder. Hepurred hoarsely to show his thanks, then slipped away to stand beside Graystripe.Meows of tribute sounded from the crowd, and the voices of the Clan rose in the still night air to chantthe new warrior names. "Fireheart! Graystripe! Fireheart! Graystripe!"Fireheart looked around the Clan, seeing faces that had grown so familiar over the last few moons. Helistened to them as they called his new name and felt overwhelmed by the kindness and respect he sawshining in their eyes."It is almost moonhigh," meowed Bluestar. "In the tradition of our ancestors, Fireheart and Graystripemust sit in silent vigil until dawn, and guard the camp alone while we sleep."Fireheart and Graystripe nodded solemnly.

As the rest of the Clan began to melt away back to their dens, Tigerclaw pushed past Fireheart. TheThunderClan deputy slowed as he passed and hissed quietly into his ear, "Don't think you can outwit me,kittypet. Be careful what you tell Bluestar."A cold shiver ran down Fireheart's spine. Bluestar had to know about Tigerclaw's treachery!As Tigerclaw headed back to the warriors' den, Fireheart left Graystripe sitting alone in the clearing andbounded after Bluestar. He caught up with her outside her den. "Bluestar, I know I'm breaking the vow ofsilence, but I must speak with you before I begin my vigil."Bluestar looked at Fireheart and shook her head.

"This is an important ritual, Fireheart. You can speakto me in the morning."Fireheart dipped his head in acceptance. Tigerclaw was not a problem that could be solved overnightanyway.

He returned to Graystripe's side in the middle of the clearing. The two friends exchanged glances,but said nothing.Fireheart looked at the moon above his head. His orange coat glowed silver in the cold light. Aroundhim, the bushes and trees were draped in mist that brushed damply against his fur. Fireheart closed his eyesand recalled the dreams of his kittenhood. The cool forest scents in his nostrils were real now, and the life of awarrior stretched ahead of him. He felt unrestrained joy flood up from his paws and surge through his body.Then he opened his eyes with a jolt. Another pair of eyes was shining back at him from the warriors' den.Tigerclaw! Fireheart stared back without blinking. He was a warrior now.

He had made an enemy of the Clan'sdeputy, but Tigerclaw had made an enemy of him. Fireheart was not the same naive young cat who hadjoined the Clan all those moons ago. He was bigger, stronger, faster, and wiser. If he was destined to opposeTigerclaw, then so be it. Fireheart was ready for the challenge.

Chapter 4

Graystripe felt fireheart lean on his shoulder, He smiled at his friend. "We're warriors now!" He thought as he lifted his gaze back up to the starlit sky. In his mind, he replayed yesterday's victory at the ShadowClan camp: Brokenstar's glittering eyes as theShadowClan leader backed away, hissing threats, before fleeing into the trees after his traitorous companions.The remaining ShadowClan cats had been grateful to ThunderClan for helping them to get rid of their cruelleader, and for the peace ThunderClan had promised them while they recovered. Brokenstar had not justbrought chaos to his own Clan—he had driven the whole of WindClan from their camp, right out of Clanterritory.

He had been a dark shadow in the forest since before Fireheart had left his kittypet life to join ThunderClan. Afterward, Fireheart had told the Clan that Ravenpaw had been killed by ShadowClan. If what Ravenpaw said about Tigerclaw was true, it was best if the ThunderClan deputy believed his apprentice had died, for he knew a secret Tigerclaw would do anything to conceal. Ravenpaw had told Fireheart that the mighty tabby warrior had murdered Redtail, the old ThunderClan deputy, in the hope that the would become the new deputy...which, eventually, he had.

Clan tradition demanded silence on this night. This was their vigil—the night when a new warrior guarded the Clan and reflected on his new name and status. Until last night, Graystripe had been known by his apprentice name of Graypaw. He glanced toward the warriors' den at the other side of the clearing. Through the branches that sheltered the den, he recognized the broad shoulders of Tigerclaw as he slept. At the foot of Highrock, the lichen that draped the entrance to Bluestar's den twitched, and Graystripe saw his Clan leader push her way out.

She stopped and lifted her head to sniff the air. Then she padded silently out of Highrock's shadow, her long fur glowing blue-gray in

the dawn light. Bluestar had mourned Redtail's death with the rest of the Clan, believing him to have been killed in battle by Oakheart, the deputy of RiverClan. Graystripe knew Fireheart had hesitated before, knowing how important Tigerclaw was to her, but the danger was too great. Bluestar needed to know that her Clan was harboring a cold-blooded murderer.

Tigerclaw emerged from the warriors' den and met Bluestar at the edge of the clearing. He murmuredsomething to her, his tail flicking urgently.Fireheart stifled his instinctive meow of greeting. The sky was growing light, but until he knew for surethat the sun was above the horizon, he dared not break his silence. Impatience fluttered in his chest like atrapped bird. He must speak with Bluestar as soon as he could. But for now, all he could do was nodrespectfully at the two cats as they passed him. Graystripe nudged Fireheart and pointed upward with his nose. An orange glow was justvisible on the horizon.

"Glad to see the dawn, you two?" Whitestorm's deep meow took Graystripe by surprise. He had not noticed the white warrior approaching. Fireheart and Graystripe nodded together."It's all right; you may speak now. Your vigil is over." Whitestorm's voice was kind. Yesterday he had fought side by side with Fireheart and Graystripe in the battle with ShadowClan. There was a new respect in his eyes as he looked at them. "Thank you, Whitestorm," Fireheart meowed gratefully. He stood and stretched his stiff legs one at a time.

Graystripe pushed himself up too. "Brrrrr!" he meowed, shaking the chill from his fur. "I thought the sun would never come up!" A scornful voice mewed from outside the apprentices' den. "The great warrior speaks!" It was Sandpaw, her pale orange coat fluffed up with hostility. Dustpaw was sitting beside her. With his dark tabby pelt, he looked like Sandpaw's shadow. He puffed out his chest importantly and mocked, "I'm surprised such heroes even feel the cold!" Sandpaw purred with amusement. Whitestorm shot them a stern look.

"Go and find something to eat; then rest," he ordered Fireheart and Graystripe. The older warrior turned away and padded toward the apprentices' den. "Come on, you two," hemeowed to Sandpaw and

Dustpaw. "It's time for your training." "I hope he has them chasing blue squirrels all day!" Graystripe hissed to Fireheart as they headed toward the corner where a few pieces of fresh-kill remained from last night. "But there aren't any blue squirrels," Fireheart mewed in confusion. "Precisely!" Graystripe's amber eyes gleamed." You can't exactly blame them. They did begin their training before us," Fireheart pointed out mildly.

"If they'd fought in the battle yesterday, they'd probably have been made warriors too.""I suppose." Graystripe shrugged. "Hey, look!" They'd reached the fresh-kill pile. "One mouse each and a chaffinch to share!" The two friends picked up their meal and looked at each other. Graystripe suddenly sparked with delight. "I suppose we take it to the warriors' side of the camp now," he meowed. "I suppose we do," Fireheart purred, padding after his friend to the patch of nettles where they had often watched Whitestorm, Tigerclaw, and the other warriors share fresh-kill. "Now what?" asked Graystripe, gulping down his last mouthful. "I don't know about you, but I think I could sleep for half a moon."

"Me too," Fireheart agreed. The two friends got to their paws and made their way toward the warriors' den. Fireheart stuck his head through the low-hanging branches. Mousefur and Longtail were still asleep on the other side of the den. He pushed his way inside and found a patch of moss at the edge. The smell told him it wasn't a sleeping place already used by another warrior. Graystripe settled down beside him.

Graystripe lay beside Fireheart washing his flank. They had just finished sharing ameal beside the camp clearing. The sun had set and Graystripe could see the moon, almost full now, gleamingin a cold, clear sky. The past few days had been busy. It seemed that every time they lay down for a rest,Tigerclaw sent them out on patrol or a hunting mission. Fireheart began to wash his paw, his eyes flicking around the camp, searching hopefully for Bluestar."What are you looking for?" meowed Graystripe through a tongueful of fur. "Bluestar," Fireheart answered, lowering his paw.

"Why?" Graystripe stopped washing and looked up at his friend. "You've had one eye on her ever sinceour vigil. What are you planning to do?""I have to tell her where Ravenpaw is, and warn

her about Tigerclaw," Fireheart meowed."You promised Ravenpaw you'd tell them he was dead!" Graystripe sounded amazed."I only promised to tell Tigerclaw he was dead. Bluestar should know the whole story. She needs toknow what her deputy is capable of."Graystripe lowered his voice to an urgent hiss. "But we only have Ravenpaw's word that Tigerclawkilled Redtail." "Don't you believe him?" Fireheart asked.

"Look, if Tigerclaw lied about killing Oakheart in revenge for Redtail's death, that means Redtail musthave killed Oakheart himself. And I can't believe that Redtail would have deliberately killed another Clandeputy in battle. It goes against the warrior code—we fight to prove our strength and defend our territory, notto kill each other.""But I'm not trying to make accusations against Redtail!" Fireheart protested. "It's Tigerclaw who is theproblem." Redtail had been the ThunderClan deputy before Tigerclaw. Graystripe knew Fireheart had never met him, but Redtail had been deeply respected by his Clanmates.Graystripe didn't meet Fireheart's gaze. "What you are saying has implications for Redtail's honor. Andnone of the other cats have a problem with Tigerclaw. It was only Ravenpaw who was scared of him."

"So you think Ravenpaw made the story up because hedidn't get along with his mentor?" Fireheart meowed scornfully."No," mumbled Graystripe. "I just think we should be careful." There was silence for a bit. "It's okay," Fireheart meowed at last. "You can stay out of it." Graystripe nodded and returned to washing. Graystripe's ears flicked excitedly as he heard Bluestar's call. "A naming ceremony?" he meowed. "Itmust be Longtail getting his first apprentice. He's been dropping hints for days." He bounded over to join thecats gathering at the edge of the clearing, and, still itching with frustration, Fireheart followed.A small black-and-white kit padded into the clearing. His soft paws made no sound on the hard earth.

He walked toward the Highrock with his pale eyes lowered and Fireheart almost expected to see him tremble—there was something in the slope of this kit's shoulders that made him seem too young and timid to be anapprentice. "From this day forward," Bluestar meowed, staring down at the kit, "until he has earned his

warriorname, this apprentice will be called Swiftpaw."There was no flash of determination in the eyes of the black-and-white kit as he looked up at his leader.Instead his amber eyes were wide with anxiety. Bluestar spoke again. "Longtail, you were Darkstripe's apprentice. He taught you well, and you havebecome a fierce and loyal warrior. I hope you will pass some of these qualities on to Swiftpaw." "It's okay, you're doing fine," Longtail murmured encouragingly. Graystripe looked at Fireheart beside him. "What's up with you?" He whispered. "That'll be us one day."Fireheart nodded.